



Consumer Corner

by Illinois Attorney General LISA MADIGAN



CHANGES IN THE SALE OF COLD TABLETS HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF METH

You may have noticed some recent changes in the way adult-strength cold medicines are packaged, displayed, and sold. While these changes will not keep you from purchasing the cold medicine you need when you are under the weather, they are vital to our state's fight against methamphetamine - commonly known as meth. On January 1, 2005, a new law that I proposed last year, sponsored by Senator Bill Haine (D-Alton) and Representative John Bradley (D-Marion), became effective, giving Illinois one of the strongest anti-meth laws in the country.

Q: *I went to my drugstore the other day to buy cold medicine but couldn't find it in its usual spot. I asked the pharmacist about it, and she said that some cold medicines are now being kept behind the counter. Why is this?*

A: Retailers throughout Illinois are complying with a new law—the Methamphetamine Manufacturing Chemical Retail Sale Control Act—that changes the way some cold tablets are packaged, displayed, and sold. As part of this law, cold tablets that contain pseudoephedrine are subject to restrictions on the way they can be displayed and sold. One particular category of cold tablets – those such as Sudafed that contain pseudoephedrine as their only active ingredient—must be placed behind the counter or in a locked case. This simply means that for this special category of cold tablets, you must ask for a package rather than getting it yourself from an open shelf. You may still buy these over-the-counter medicines without a prescription.

Q: *How does placing cold medicine behind the counter stop the spread of meth—why is this law necessary?*

A: Methamphetamine is the number one drug problem in rural America and the fastest-growing drug threat in the nation. Highly addictive and destructive, meth can be made easily using readily available, inexpensive ingredients. Although there are many different

“recipes” for meth, the essential ingredient common to all is ephedrine or pseudoephedrine—substances found in certain over-the-counter cold tablets. Because meth cannot be made without ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, the new law was created to restrict the supply of these ingredients to meth “cooks” and make it more difficult for them to produce meth.

Q: *Will the new law require any other changes in the way cold tablets containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine are sold?*

A: Yes. The Act requires other safeguards in addition to restricting the placement and display of certain adult-strength cold tablets containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine. First, the cold tablets must be sold in blister packs containing no more than three grams of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine in a package. Second, retailers may not sell more than two packages of cold tablets containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine at a time, and they may not sell any such packages if they know the buyer will use the tablets to make meth. Finally, retailers must train their employees to uphold these requirements. If retailers or their employees do not comply with the law, they face criminal prosecution.

For more information about stopping the spread of meth, please visit MethNet on my Web site at:

www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov/methnet/